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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 000686

SIPDIS

NAIROBI FOR FFP BACON
KAMPALA FOR REFCORD
GENEVA FOR RMA

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TAGS: PREF PGOV EAID TZ

SUBJECT: JOINT REFUGEE DEMARCHE: TIMING NOT RIGHT

REF: STATE 41723

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Michael S. Owen for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: Members of the diplomatic corps discussed the proposed reftel joint demarche on refugees on March 24, on the margins of the monthly joint UN briefing on the refugee situation. The diplomats and UNHCR officials alike thought that the timing was wrong for a joint demarche, since Tanzanian government official had stopped making inflammatory anti-refugee remarks in their campaigns, refugee screening had improved, and there had been no recent refoulements. All agreed in principle to a joint demarche at some future time, if and when the situation deteriorates. The consensus was that a joint demarche should contain pre-agreed, generic language emphasizing respect for international refugee conventions, and noting with concern whatever event triggered the demarche. End Summary.

¶12. (C) UNHCR Country Director, Chrysantus Ache, said he thought that any support the international community provides for refugee protection was in principle a good thing. However, he thought what the international community had done so far was sufficient. He said UNHCR had vigorously protested refoulements with Tanzanian Government officials. Ache believed that the formation of ad hoc screening committees, with UNHCR as observers, was a clear step in the right direction. He urged any concerned diplomats to attend the Protection workshop planned for April 5-6, which would address screening, human rights violations, and freedom of movement. Ache said that senior UNHCR official Erica Feller would travel to Tanzania to participate in the workshop and to continue to push the government to respect international conventions. Ache also said it was important for any future joint demarche to be delivered in Bujumbura and Kinshasa as well, since the UNHCR faced strong pressure from these governments to repatriate refugees.

¶13. (C) The Norwegian diplomatic representative, Inger Tveit, expressed concern about language in the proposed demarche urging government officials to avoid politicizing refugee issues, because in an election campaign, immigration and asylum are legitimate topics for debate. She also said she was concerned that the timing was inappropriate, since refoulements had now ceased. In the future, she suggested that any demarche on refugees should begin with language supporting continued adherence to 1951 Convention. Tveit said these were her personal comments, which she did not have the opportunity to clear with her Foreign Ministry.

¶14. (C) British DFID representative Julia Norton expressed her concern that the timing was inappropriate, because the refugee situation had recently improved. She was also concerned about whether the Minister of Home Affairs or the Minister of State should receive any demarche, since past problems seemed to have originated with the District and Regional Commissioners, who do not answer to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

¶15. (C) The European Commission Humanitarian Representative, Yves Horton, said he continued to be concerned about refugee human rights violations in Ngara district, but he concurred with the consensus agreement that the timing was not right for this joint demarche. He said he thought that in the future, it was important to be able to respond quickly to any refoulements that occurred; currently UNHCR and diplomats were unable to do so. He said he would recommend to Brussels the consensus agreement to not deliver the joint demarche at this time.

¶16. (C) World Food Program Country Director Patrick Buckley said he was also concerned that "timing was everything in politics" and that the timing for this demarche had passed. He offered to provide the budget information that the WFP had already gathered about its programs in refugee-hosting areas. He also said any future demarche should emphasize not only the past benefits but the prospective benefits the Government could realize from the continued hosting of

refugees.

17. (C) UNICEF emergency officer Robert Carr said that UNICEF was working with other UN agencies to bridge the "humanitarian to development aid gap," which will open when refugees leave Northwest Tanzania. He said the newly formed working group might have information about the ways in which refugee hosting areas benefit from the presence of refugees.

18. (U) Swedish diplomat Ditte Engell said she had contacted Stockholm about the demarche but her embassy had not received any information about it.

19. (C) Comment: Post agrees that the time for a joint demarche on refugees has passed. To further press the issue when it has fallen off the radar screen may just encourage a political backlash. Post thinks the best approach is to agree on generic language that each capital could pre-approve for rapid delivery if and when refoulements or serious violations occur again. If this approach is approved, Poloff will work with the diplomatic corps to circulate a draft of the generic language. Poloff continues to work with UN agencies to document how refugee hosting areas have received concrete benefits from the presence of refugees. Please advise on the next steps for the joint demarche. End Comment.

OWEN